



Representative
Kirk Pearson • 39th District



2005 Session-End Report
Accomplishments and Missed Opportunities

July 2005

Dear Neighbors,

The end of the 105-day legislative session in Olympia on April 24 gave Washington's citizens a mixed bag of successes, disappointments, and missed opportunities.

What really concerns me is all of the unnecessary and burdensome tax increases imposed upon taxpayers by the majority party in the House and the Senate.

Despite our best efforts, we also missed or were denied several opportunities to provide for true election reforms and stronger DUI laws.

Nevertheless, there were several achievements that emerged from the 2005 session, including additional public safety laws, saving ballfields for kids, helping victims of identity theft, and providing a prescription drug bill for seniors.

This newsletter provides a brief glimpse of the accomplishments and missed opportunities from the 2005 legislative session.

As always, I'm interested in your thoughts and comments. If I can ever be of service, please contact me.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve you!

Sincerely,

Kirk Pearson
State Representative

COMMITTEES:

Criminal Justice and Corrections (ranking Republican)

Hood Canal Select Committee (ranking Republican)

Appropriations

**Working to provide
a safer Washington**

One of the top priorities of government is to protect the safety of its citizens. As Republican leader on the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee, I introduced several bills with the goal of providing a safer Washington.

House Bill 2101 requires a registered sex offender to notify the sheriff's office if he or she is planning to enroll at a public or private school. The sheriff's office is required to notify the school. If the student is listed as a Level Two or Level Three (most likely to re-offend) sex offender, the principal is to notify all teachers and supervisors of that student. Notification of Level One offenders would be given to personnel who need to know for security purposes. This measure, which was signed into law by the governor, is an additional step toward helping protect children in our schools.

Another measure signed into law, **House Bill 1313**, seeks to protect visitors and children who visit Washington state parks. The bill requires state Parks and Recreation Commission job applicants, volunteers and contractors to the to undergo background checks. This legislation will help prevent sex offenders and felons from being put into a position of authority in our parks where our citizens and children could be victimized.

House Bill 1199 sought to allow law enforcement officers to collect blood samples from drivers involved in fatality accidents. On-site collection would ensure for the best evidence possible.

I also introduced **House Bill 1200**, which would have established a statewide protocol for conducting an assessment of an individual's abuse of alcohol and drugs. No single standard exists that treatment centers can use to assess their clients. As a result, DUI offenders are often misdiagnosed and are able to escape treatment, which means they may be back on the road again. A statewide protocol would close that gap.

Although both of these bills died in the House, I plan to push for them next year for a safer Washington.

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Budget brings higher spending, unnecessary tax increases

Two years ago, when facing a \$2.8 billion deficit, I joined with my colleagues in the House and Senate to support a budget that funded the priorities of the state without raising taxes. We recognized at that time that by holding the line against tax increases and funding the most essential needs of government, it would allow the state's economy to grow and provide new jobs that would bring in more revenue to the state. It turned out to be the right decision.

In March, as a result of that decision and a stronger economy, the state's revenue forecast indicated that Washington would have \$1.7 billion in additional revenues over the previous biennium. This 7 percent increase in revenues was good news because it essentially wiped away a budget "shortfall" of nearly the same amount.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I felt **this increase was sufficient to balance the budget and provide for essential services of government without a hike in taxes.** It apparently was not good enough for members of the majority party in the House and Senate. Instead, they wanted to increase spending in the budget by 12 percent -- the highest spending increase in 14 years.

To achieve this level of spending, they first had to eliminate **Initiative 601**, the spending limit law approved by voters in 1993. This made it easier to raise taxes by a simple-majority vote, instead of a two-thirds majority requirement which was contained within I-601. Then, with a simple majority vote, they raised taxes by more than \$400 million, including:

- **Cigarette tax (\$174.7 million)** - Increases the cigarette tax by 60 cents per pack, bringing the state's per pack tax up to \$2.025;
- **Liquor liter tax (\$49.7 million);** - Imposes an additional per liter tax of \$1.33 for liquor store purchases, bringing the total state tax to \$3.77 per liter;
- **Sales tax on extended warranties (\$37.4 million)**
 - Applies the state sales tax to consumer purchases of extended warranties.
- **Death tax (\$138.7 million)** - Imposes a stand-alone death tax on non-farms valued at more than \$1.5 million for people dying in 2005 and \$2 million thereafter.

I voted against these tax increases. Why? Because they are unnecessary and will only serve to hurt our fragile economy. Most importantly, we could have

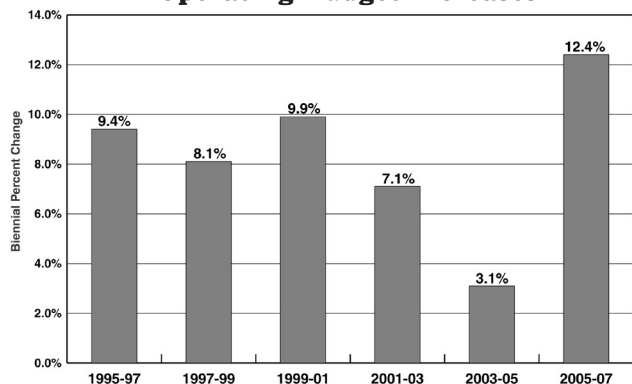
balanced the budget and preserved vital services **WITHOUT** any of these tax increases.

Unfortunately, the plan we created two years ago to set priorities, hold the line against tax increases, and keep spending in check was set aside for a spending spree at taxpayers' expense. An example is that the state's new two-year \$25.962 billion spending plan increases total state employees by 2,843 full-time positions. It also relies on budget gimmicks such as **delaying state pension payments** and taking money away from health-care assistance for low-income families.

The June revenue forecast projecting an additional \$450 million into the state coffers underscores what I have said all along: tax increases are unnecessary!

Government shouldn't be growing faster than our paychecks. When was the last time you received a 12 percent pay raise? We missed an opportunity to provide a responsible, sustainable no-new-taxes budget. I believe taxpayers deserve far better!

Operating Budget Increases



Capital budget provides for 39th District projects

More than \$14 million for projects in the 39th District is contained in the state's \$3.3 billion capital construction budget. This includes \$12,750 for the Concrete Heritage Museum, \$1.7 million for the Centennial Trail in Arlington, \$3.1 million for acquisition of land in the Sultan basin, \$2.8 million for security improvements at the Monroe Correctional Center, \$375,000 for Arlington Performing Arts, \$100,000 for the Monroe Teen Center, and \$50,000 for expansion of the Granite Falls Museum.

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Flood control legislation gains little ground

In the last couple of years, heavy rains resulting in flooding has caused extensive damage to rivers, homes and property in the 39th District. Local citizens are frustrated about regulations preventing them from protecting streambanks, property, and the ecosystem of our rivers.

To prevent future damage and preserve our rivers' ecosystem, I introduced House Bill 1354. This measure looks to provide solutions for Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom and King counties by creating a pilot flood control and stream bank restoration program. The bill would work to "protect public and private property, protect or enhance habitat, and protect fish life."

There's nothing good for our environment, fish and citizens when a home, a propane tank or other property are floating down the river. That's why we need to look for more localized solutions to this problem. Unfortunately, while we were granted a hearing on the bill in the House Natural Resources, Ecology and Parks Committee, the measure did not move forward.

Visit your state capitol!

After being closed for more than two years for renovations, the state Capitol is now reopened. I invite you to come to Olympia and visit your Capitol. It is my pleasure to host groups during the legislative session, such as this year when the Legislature honored the Sedro-Woolley wrestling team. Tours are given year-round in the Capitol. For more information, contact the Capitol Tour Office at (360) 902-8880 or go online to: <http://www.ga.wa.gov/visitor/index.html>



Good bills, bad bills pass

We had a mixture of very good bills and very bad bills that made their way to the governor and were signed into law. Here are some examples:

BILLS I SUPPORTED

Ballfields for Kids - To prevent existing ballfields in Snohomish County from being closed, we adopted **HB 2241** which allows baseball and soccer games to continue on those ballfields.

Identity Theft - This is one of the fastest growing crimes in Washington. **SB 6043** requires consumers to be notified by credit reporting and consumer-data agencies if a security breach compromises their personal information. **SB 5939** allows victims to obtain police reports and to work with credit reporting agencies to place a security freeze on their file and clean up fraudulent accounts.

Dropout prevention - **HB 1708** works to reduce school dropout rates.

Developmental disability support - **HB 1791** creates a trust fund for the developmentally disabled and permits the lease of surplus property at Rainier School to raise money for the fund.

Fighting methamphetamine - **HB 2266** requires stores to remove cold and allergy medications from their store shelves which are used to make meth and sell them only to customers who produce identification that shows they are at least 18 years old. Citizens from Snohomish County came to the state Capitol to testify in favor of this bill.

BILLS I DID NOT SUPPORT

Gasoline tax - **SB 6103** boosted the state gas tax by 9.5 cents a gallon over the next four years to pay for new transportation projects, few of which are funded in our district. Many local residents commute long distances and will pay more without getting any benefit locally from the increase.

Hunter fine - **SB 5227** imposes a \$10 fee on hunters who fail to report harvests, which must be paid before a current license is obtained. The dollars from this fine will not go to help habitat or wildlife resources. Instead, they will fund additional government bureaucracy, which is why I didn't support this bill.

Rep. Kirk Pearson (far right) and Rep. Dan Kristiansen (far left) introduced a resolution honoring the 2005 Sedro-Woolley High School Wrestling Championship Team. Earlier this year, the team captured its fourth consecutive Team State Championship and ninth overall Team State Championship at the Washington Mat Classic in Tacoma.

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Election reform bills fall short

The election legislation that passed falls well short of doing what's necessary to make sure every vote has a voter, or to prevent eligible voters from being disenfranchised.

Lawmakers missed several opportunities to address the most important concerns, like proof of identification, proof of citizenship and cleanup of the voter registration rolls. I introduced **House Bill 2008**, a measure that would have made it a felony for election officials to fail to comply with election laws. Unfortunately, this bill, along with a comprehensive set of reforms to effectively deal with our election problems, was not supported by the majority party.

An attempt at affordable prescription drugs

To help our senior citizens and others who are having a difficult time paying for their medications, I supported legislation to allow the importation of prescription drugs from Canadian wholesalers. Although **Senate Bill 5470** allows importation of certain prescription drugs from Canada under state law, changes in federal law are still required before Washington seniors can legally purchase those drugs. This measure was signed into law.

Two district offices now open to serve you!

It's important to be accessible to the people who I serve. That's why I have now opened a second 39th District office serving the Sky Valley, in addition to the office in Sedro-Woolley. The Sky Valley office is staffed Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. - 6 p.m., by my legislative assistant, Cameron Bailey. The Sedro Woolley office is open by appointment only.

If you have a legislative issue you would like to discuss, please call our office in Index to talk with my assistant or set up an appointment. The phone number is (360) 793-0565. I'm also happy to meet with you in your hometown by appointment.

Office Locations:

SKY VALLEY

51216 North Riverside Road
Index, WA 98256
Phone: (360) 793-0565
Office hours: Mon - Thurs, 7 a.m - 6 p.m.

SEDRO-WOOLLEY

720 Murdock St., Suite 101
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
Phone: (360) 856-3588

Call Index office for appointment

OLYMPIA MAILING ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
Phone: (360) 786-7816
(During legislative sessions only)
Toll-free legislative hotline: 1-800-562-6000

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